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ABSTRACT

Studies concerning school counselor roles have been conducted in various parts of the country. This study was conducted in South Carolina to determine the extent of counselor activity in certain areas of role performance. The questions to be answered were: (1) in what order of frequency do counselors report their major role activities and, (2) do counselors of differing educational, experiential, and situational backgrounds report performing their roles differently. A total of 356 counselors were mailed an informational questionnaire and the School Counselor Performance Index (SCPI), which is included in this report. The results included: (1) counselors highest priority was working with individual students, and (2) counselors second priority was establishing and maintaining staff relationships. Due to major changes in the SCPI, however, the data is not conclusive. Nevertheless, there are promising signs that the SCPI used in this study can quantitatively help to differentiate among and between subgroups of persons trained as counselors. This may help counseling students to understand the various functions they need to perform. (Author/KJ)

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ROLE PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN SOUTH CAROLINA*

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In 1958, there were fourteen full-time counselors in South Carolina schools. During the ensuing years, the number of positions in the secondary schools has increased more rapidly than the supply of counselors. Studies concerning school counselor roles have been conducted in various parts of the country, in an effort to identify the activities which most counselors perform. Early data reported by Hitchcock (1953), Martyn (1957), Tennyson (1958) and Vassello and Kindred (1957) seemed to suggest that when counselors did not have a clear understanding of their roles, they tended to perform more clerical and administrative tasks than they did guidance or counseling functions. One study revealed that school administrators had a clearer concept of what they expected of their counselors than the counselors did themselves (Sweeney, 1966). The leadership of the American School Counselor Association sponsored a study which ultimately resulted in their published statement on the role of the secondary school counselor (1966). With the knowledge that role studies have revealed important information for counselors and that there have been significant changes in the number of people who are holding positions as counselors, the following study was conducted in South Carolina to determine the extent of counselor activity in certain areas of role performance. Related information concerning counselor characteristics also was collected, but will not be reported here.

PROBLEM

This study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. In what order of frequency do counselors report their major role activities?
2. Do counselors of differing educational, experiential, and situational backgrounds report performing their roles differently?

POPULATION AND PROCEDURE

The population of counselors for the study was obtained by utilizing the South Carolina State Department of Education mailing list of secondary school counselors and alternately selecting every other person for inclusion in the study. This constituted a fifty percent sample (N=356) of the total population of secondary school counselors in South Carolina (N=712) during the 1967-68 school year. A total of 225 (60%) usable instruments were returned from those counselors to whom the instruments were mailed.

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* Presented at the 1969 APGA Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada

Two-thirds of the respondents were female. One-half of those responding were between the ages of 35 and 49, while approximately one-third were over 50 years of age. Three-quarters of the individuals were married.

Forty-four percent (N=97) had 19 or more semester hours in guidance graduate study. Twenty-nine (N=67) and twenty-seven (N=61) percent respectively had 12 to 18 semester hours, and 0 to 11 semester hours. Fifty-four percent (N=90) of those for whom information was available (N=168) were assigned full-time in guidance. Twenty-three percent (N=40) were assigned less than half-time, and twenty-three percent (N=38) were assigned less than full-time, but more than half-time to guidance responsibilities.

Forty-six percent (N=105) had been a counselor for three years or less; forty-five percent (N=102) had been a counselor for twelve years or less, but for at least four years or more; and nine percent (N=18) had been a counselor for thirteen years or more. Forty-six percent (N=103) had been a teacher for nine or more years; thirty percent (N=66) had been teachers for four years or less; and twenty-four percent (N=56) had been teachers for from five to eight years.

While unwarranted generalizations will be avoided in deference to the limitations of the study, the general characteristics of this population are similar to those of the counselors (N=738) surveyed during the Spring of 1967 (Taylor, 1968). One notable difference is the higher percentage of full-time counselors (54%) responding to this study compared to the lower percentage (approximately 33%) reported as full-time in guidance during the 1966-67 school year. Two factors may have influenced this difference. There could be more full-time counselors assigned during the interval since the first survey. Another reason may be that more of the full-time counselors believed the study was relevant to them.

One instrument in addition to the informational questionnaire was utilized in this phase of the study. The School Counselor Performance Index (SCPI) was a modification of an instrument used in counselor role studies in Ohio (Stevic, 1963) (Sweeney, 1966). The revised instrument was given a new answering format, the number of items in each category was reduced from thirty to ten, and the number of categories was increased from six to nine. The new format was designed to allow the respondent an opportunity to indicate the extent to which he performed each activity; 1 - never to 5 - very much. The three new categories were included because they are performed by counselors, but were not represented in the original instrument. The first six categories were items from the original instrument, and the last three catagories of items were obtained by utilizing the same procedures recommended by Ferguson (1952) and used by Stevic.

These categories are as follows:

1. providing services to individual students.
2. providing services to groups of students.
3. establishing and maintaining staff relationships.
4. promoting the general school program.
5. establishing and maintaining community relationships.

6. accepting professional responsibilities.
7. performing administrative duties.
8. performing guidance clerical duties.
9. performing teaching duties.

A one-way analysis of variance was computed for each of the category's mean scores to determine the presence of significant difference (.05) among the sub-groups of populations established by the educational, experiential, and situational factors. The Sheefe' method for computing differences between the mean scores also was used where differences were observed. This is a conservative procedure which may not reveal differences that other tests would uncover. The differences which are reported, however, would be corroborated by other techniques.

FINDINGS

The first question which the study sought to answer was the order of frequency in which counselors reported their major activities. These are reported in Table I. The scores reported in this table are within ± 2 points of scores collected in a similar study conducted during the 1966-67 school year with a twenty-five percent random sample of the secondary school counselor in South Carolina (Sweeney and Blake, 1968).

TABLE 1

Rank and Significance of Difference in Means for Categories of the School Counselors Performance Index

Category	(N=225) Rank	Mean*
Providing services for individual students	1	38.56
Establishing and maintaining staff relationships	2	32.84
Promoting the general school program	3	30.39
Accepting professional responsibilities	4	29.60
Providing services for groups of students	5	29.24
Performing guidance clerical duties	6	27.68
Establishing and maintaining community relationships	7	24.10
Performing teaching duties	8	19.29
Performing administrative duties	9	18.38

* Score range for each category is 10 to 50

The second question to be answered concerned the differences which might exist in role performance of counselors with differing educational, experiential, and situational backgrounds or conditions. Table 2 reports the differences in mean scores for the various categories of the SCPI for the groups of persons having varying hours of graduate education in guidance.* Significant F ratios (.01) were present in eight of the nine categories. Within the first six categories, which tend to be most guidance related, the counselors with the most education in guidance reported devoting more time to these activities than the other two groups with less training. They also reported doing more clerical duties and less teaching than the other groups.

TABLE 2

Summary of Analysis of Variance for School Counselor Performance Index Scores and Graduate Education (N=225)

Categories	0-11* N=61	12-18 67	19-over 97	F**	P
Providing services to individual students	35.64	34.93	39.72	6.48	.01***
Providing services to groups of students	27.85	24.85	30.93	8.60	.01***
Establishing and maintaining community relationships	21.38	20.87	26.06	9.77	.01***
Promoting the general school program	28.71	25.76	32.13	9.68	.01***
Establishing and maintaining staff relationships	30.30	28.96	34.41	7.88	.01***
Accepting professional responsibilities	26.09	25.91	31.90	13.89	.01***
Performing administrative duties	18.26	16.81	18.03	0.97	NS
Performing guidance clerical duties	25.87	23.99	29.08	6.54	.01***
Performing teaching duties	21.28	19.49	16.31	6.43	.01***

* Semester hours
** F required 4.71 for .01 significance
*** Significance between all sub-scores

As has been true in previous studies, no particularly significant differences were found among the groups with varying years of teaching experience (Table 3). One exception was the tendency for those counselors with the greatest number of years of teaching experience to score higher on "accepting professional responsibilities."

TABLE 3

Summary of Analysis of Variance for School Counselors Performance Index Scores and Teaching Experience (N=225)

Categories	N=66 0-4*	N=56 5-8*	N=103 9-over*	F**	P
Providing services to individual students	35.70	38.54	37.41	1.41	NS
Providing services to groups of students	26.78	30.09	28.08	1.96	NS
Establishing and maintaining community relationships	22.12	24.23	23.43	0.94	NS
Promoting the general school program	28.26	30.41	29.38	0.77	NS
Establishing and maintaining staff relationships	30.30	32.48	32.11	1.00	NS
Accepting professional responsibilities	26.18	29.57	29.50	3.45	.05
Performing administrative duties	17.49	18.32	17.56	0.30	NS
Performing guidance clerical duties	25.97	28.50	26.18	1.41	NS
Performing teaching duties	17.38	19.80	18.74	1.11	NS

* Years
** F required 3.04 for .05 significance

Differences in five of the nine categories were reported (Table 4) for persons with varying years of experience as a counselor. Persons with four to twelve years of counseling experience tended to have higher scores than the other groups in every category except the ninth, "performing teaching duties," and in that case, there was no significant difference among the scores. Providing services to individual students, accepting professional responsibilities, providing services to groups of students, performing guidance clerical duties, and establishing and maintaining community relationships were reported as being performed to a greater extent by those counselors who entered counseling positions in the last four to twelve years. In most cases, the greatest differences (.05) were between those reporting to have been counselors thirteen or more years and those with four to twelve years experience. Evidently, the persons who have been in guidance the longest perform their role somewhat differently from the relatively newer but experienced counselors.

TABLE 4

Summary of Analysis of Variance for School Counselor Performance Index Scores and Counseling Experience
(N=225)

Categories	Means N=105 0-3*	N=102 4-12*	N=18 13+	F**	P
Providing services to individual students	36.02	38.64	33.67	3.04	.05
Providing services to groups of students	27.43	29.68	22.79	4.69	.05
Establishing and maintaining community relationships	21.56	24.80	22.68	3.62	.05
Promoting the general school program	28.65	30.28	25.98	1.84	NS
Establishing and maintaining staff relationships	30.22	32.97	31.00	2.12	NS
Accepting professional responsibilities	27.11	30.03	26.92	3.15	.05
Performing administrative duties	17.39	18.14	16.67	0.54	NS
Performing guidance clerical duties	25.94	28.02	21.78	3.80	.05
Performing teaching duties	19.70	18.08	14.67	2.65	NS

* Years
** F required 3.04 for .05 significance

The counselors who are assigned full-time to guidance responsibilities had higher scores than the other two groups in seven of the nine categories (Table 5). The two categories in which they scored lower were "performing teaching responsibilities" and "performing administrative responsibilities." Significant differences

in scores were found in six of the nine categories. There were no significant differences in the categories "providing services to groups of students," "performing administrative duties," and "performing clerical guidance duties." The most significant difference found in any group and in any category was for this group in "performing teaching duties." The lowest possible score for a category is 10, meaning that an individual or group never performed the function. Obviously, some full-time counselors performed some teaching functions, but they were clearly the exception, rather than the rule.

TABLE 5

Summary of Analysis of Variance for School Counselor Performance Index Scores and Assigned Guidance Time
(N=168)

Categories	Means N=40 less than one-half*	N=38 half less than full	N=90 full time	F**	P
Providing services to individual students	36.10	35.47	39.78	4.78	.01***
Providing services to groups of students	28.53	26.90	30.63	2.57	NS
Establishing and maintaining community relationships	21.95	21.82	25.41	3.78	.05
Promoting the general school program	27.83	27.42	31.80	4.51	.05
Establishing and maintaining staff relationships	29.55	29.87	34.49	6.33	.01***
Accepting professional responsibilities	27.88	26.13	30.89	5.05	.01***
Performing administrative duties	18.65	18.63	17.78	0.38	NS
Performing guidance clerical duties	25.03	25.90	28.20	2.10	NS
Performing teaching duties	25.40	24.03	13.26	59.54	.01****

* Time
** F required 4.75 for .01; 3.06 for .05 significance
*** Significance between subgroup 2 and 3
**** Significance between all subgroups

DISCUSSION

The counselors in the present study reported devoting their highest priority to working with individual students. No matter what grouping arrangement was made, this category was consistently first. The same observation was made for the second highest priority, "establishing and maintaining staff relationships." The concern for individual students is in keeping with the stated philosophy of guidance of most schools. The second category also consistently has been a major activity of counselors (Stevic, 1963) (Sweeney, 1966) (Sweeney and Blake, 1968). A future question to counselors might attempt to determine how adequately prepared they were in their graduate work to establish and maintain staff relationships. The author's experience as a teacher, counselor, and counselor educator suggests that too little is being done to help guidance workers develop facilitative relationships with other professionals and lay people.

While nothing conclusive can be determined from this data because of the major changes in this instrument (SCPI), the categories of "establishing and maintaining community relationships" and "accepting professional responsibilities" changed relative positions in the present study, compared to the priorities found among Ohio counselors using the earlier instrument. The South Carolina counselors reported greater activity in accepting professional responsibilities, but less in establishing and maintaining community relationships than the Ohio counselors. Whether or not differences do exist in role performance would require further study.

Another observation concerns the interaction of the background data and the scores on the SCPI. The similarity in scores between the groups with the most graduate education and those in full-time positions in guidance could suggest that with this population of counselors one of these factors is influencing the scores of the other. In this case, it appears as though graduate education in guidance is the more dominant. Eight of the nine categories among the sub-groups on graduate education were significant at the .01 level of confidence. Among the sub-groups of those assigned different amounts of time to guidance, four of the nine were significant at the .01 level, and two were significant at the .05 level of confidence. From earlier studies of background data on counselors as well as by inspection of the data on the counselors in the present study, some of the persons with 19 semester hours or more of graduate education are not assigned full-time in guidance. Further analysis and subsequent study may reveal the significance of the relationship between graduate education and role performance.

A final note on the data relates to the tendency for the scores of persons with four to twelve years of counseling experience to be significantly higher than those of persons with thirteen or more years of counseling experience. Persons with zero to three years experience tended to score somewhat between them. The median group may be the more recently and more extensively trained persons in the group. That being the case, they also would likely include many of those who were assigned to full-time positions.

CONCLUSION

The scope and purpose of this study was limited. There is a temptation to overgeneralize from data in any study which touches on a topic so close to the issues of a profession. Can we say, for example, that full-time, trained counselors perform more effectively than part-time, less trained persons functioning as counselors? Not from the data reported in this study.

There are some promising signs, however, that the instrument (SCPI) used in this study can quantitatively help us to differentiate among and between subgroups of persons functioning as counselors. This information may be helpful to counselor trainees and beginning counselors in understanding the various functions that they may be asked to perform, and how difficult but necessary it will be to set priorities.

The instrument also lends itself to being used with other professionals and lay people who constitute the counselor's publics. They, too, can report the way they perceive the counselor functioning and how they believe that he should function.

Research with counselors in other states may reveal differences in functions of counselors in urban and rural areas, large and small schools, those with varying personality characteristics, those varying in effectiveness as a counselor, and similar factors. From such data, may come many of the answers which perplex members of the profession today.

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No._____

SCHOOL COUNSELOR PERFORMANCE INDEX

Part A (1-90)

Directions:

Each statement below represents an activity that school counselors may be asked to perform. In each case you are to indicate the extent to which the activity is a part of your counseling and guidance duties by marking on the enclosed answer sheet the number which best represents your answer.

The scale is interpreted thus: 1 - Never; 2 - Little; 3 - Some; 4 - Much; and 5 - Very Much.

1. Interview parents regarding administrative procedure.
2. Supervise study hall.
3. Counsel students concerning their long range academic program in secondary school.
4. Discuss lesson assignments with students in my classes.
5. File occupational material.
6. Help a group of students.
7. Aid in integrating the guidance activities with those of the community.
8. Type letters of recommendation to colleges.
9. Assist students to appraise their educational progress.
10. Maintain occupational and educational files.
11. Counsel students concerning their educational plans.
12. Record standardized test results on permanent records.
13. Counsel students on vocational choice.
14. Act as advisor to a group of students.
15. Develop a testing program to appraise individual personality traits.
16. Work with other staff members to obtain information about students.
17. Make entries on cumulative record cards.
18. Discuss boy-girl relations with a group of students.
19. Plan the school testing program with other staff members.
20. Contact community agencies to determine solutions to student problems.

21. Write for occupational material.

22. Conduct in-service programs for teachers.

23. Serve as consultant for setting up a guidance program.

24. Act as a consultant to staff members in solving pupil problems.

25. Supervise lunch room.

26. Provide information about the guidance program to parents.

27. Conduct group guidance sessions for pupils.

28. Prepare transcripts for college.

29. Aid students to discover their capabilities.

30. Type a referral report to the school psychologist.

31. Tutor a student in remedial work.

32. Aid in the integration of guidance services with other aspects of the school program.

33. Attend a state-wide guidance conference.

34. Assist the teaching staff in securing and interpreting information about students.

35. Help students evaluate their educational progress.

36. Explain new concepts to students whom I teach.

37. Assist in the development of policies for the school's guidance department.

38. Work with groups of students in personal-social adjustment.

39. Prepare examinations for courses I teach.

40. Meet with local officials concerning the problems of youth.

41. Provide homework assignments for absentee students.

42. Conduct field trips to colleges.

43. Issue transfer to another school.

44. Work with individual faculty members to assist students in making adjustments.

45. Participate in professional organizations.

46. Develop local norms for standardized tests.

47. Attend college classes to improve skills in counseling.

48. Assist the teaching staff to interpret I.Q. tests.

49. Provide information about the school's guidance program to community groups.

50. Attend a workshop on counseling and guidance techniques.

51. Assign topics for discussion or reports in my classes.

52. Counsel students regarding personal and social adjustment.

53. Arrange testing schedule for standardized tests.

54. Help students learn satisfactory methods of making personal adjustments.

55. Orient teachers to instructional procedures.

56. Read professional publications..

57. Speak to a local service organization concerning guidance.

58. Conduct follow-up studies of graduates.

59. Interpret data about pupils to other staff members.

60. Conduct groups on visits to industrial plant.

61. Assist students to diagnose learning difficulties.

62. Conduct orientation to the next higher segment of the school.

63. Provide guidance information for other staff members.

64. Lead a discussion with students on occupations.

65. Excuse students for funerals.

66. Read articles and books in the counseling and guidance area.

67. Arrange for bus transportation.

68. Teach required courses in my school.

69. Prepare a master schedule plan.

70. Assist teachers in identifying causes for student reading. disabilities.

71. Write an article for a professional journal.

72. Handle discipline problems.

73. Accept an office in a professional organization.

74. Type letters of recommendation for students.

75. Work with potential drop-outs.

76. Code occupational material.

77. Work with citizens' committee on community problems.

78. Answer administrative or general phone calls.

79. Conduct a group guidance discussion on occupations.

80. Teach a course in study skills.

81. Orient teachers to administrative procedures.

82. Type reports to the juvenile court.

83. Serve on a committee concerning the local youth center.

84. Maintain an informational resource for placement opportunities.

85. Hold conferences with teachers and administrators concerning pupil referrals.

86. Meet with community representatives of referral agencies to discuss school problems.

87. Teach a course in occupational information.

88. Conduct group sessions with parents regarding their children.

89. Write for college catalogs.

90. Participate on the county guidance council.